

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GUATEMALA 2146

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SWEL, GT

SUBJ: SURVEY OF RECONSTRUCTION OF PUERTO BARRIOS

1. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD HAS ASKED AMBASSADOR IF US COULD URGENTLY PROVIDE A SURVEY OF THE COST OF CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW PIER AT PUERTO BARRIOS. THE EXISTING PIER SANK AS RESULT OF FEBRUARY 4, EARTHQUAKE AND THE POST IS NOW ALMOST TOTALLY INOPERATIVE. PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE WAS NOT SATISFIED WITH COST ESTIMATES HIS ENGINEERS WERE GIVING HIM AND SPECIFICALLY WOULD LIKE US NAVY SEABEES TO MAKE A SURVEY OF COST OF CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PIER. HE SAID HE WANTS PORT NOT JUST RESTORED TO FORMER CONDITION, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS OBSOLESCE, BUT IMPROVED, AND HE WOULD LIKE WORK TO BEGIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. URGENCY OF RECONSTRUCTION HE SAID BASED ON SOCIAL AS WELL AS POLITICAL NEEDS SINCE POPULATION OF PUERTO BARRIOS DEPENDS ALMOST COMPLETELY ON PORT FOR LIVELIHOOD. GOVERNMENT EXPECTS TO BE ABLE TO HANDLE FINANCING OF CONSTRUCTION THROUGH LOANS TO BE NEGOTIATED.

2. EMBASSY IS VERY RELUCTANT TO GET SEABEES INVOLVED IN THIS SURVEY PROJECT FOR MANY REASONS AND HAS TRIED TO STEER THINKING OF THE PRESIDENT AND HIS MINISTERS TO
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WORLD BANK, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND IS SENDING A PORT SUR-

VEY TEAM TO GUATEMALA WEEK OF MARCH 22 AT REQUEST OF FEGUA (NATIONAL RAILROAD), WHICH OWNS PIER. WE BELIEVE THAT PROBLEM SHOULD BASICALLY BE HANDLED IN COMMERICAL CHANNELS, HOWEVER, TO PREPARE FOR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT WHICH MAY TAKE PLACE LATE THIS WEEK AT WHICH MATTER OF PORT CERTAINLY BE RAISED AGAIN BY PRESIDENT, AMBASSADOR NEEDS ANSWERS TO FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE:

A) COULD SEABEES OR OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITY, I.E., CORPS OF ENGINEERS, PERFORM SUCH A SURVEY? IF SO, HOW SOON COULD THEY START; HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD BE REQUIRED, FOR HOW LONG AND HOW MUCH MIGHT IT COST?

B) ALTERNATIVELY, AND PREFERABLY, COULD WASHINGTON RECOMMEND SEVERAL PRIVATE PORT CONSULTANTS WHO COULD DO QUICK STUDY. FOR THEM, WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO KNOW ESTIMATED COST AND HOW SOON THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO START AND HOW LONG THEY MIGHT TAKE. FUNDING FOR THIS SURVEY FROM WHATEVER SOURCE WOULD PROBABLY COME OUT OF \$25 MILLION AID PACKAGE.

C) WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE WORLD BANK CONSIDERATION OF RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PORT? WHAT IF ANY CONCLUSIONS HAVE THEY REACHED ON BASIS OF PREVIOUS SURVEYS? IS TEAM STILL SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 21 ARRIVAL?

3. AMBASSADOR RECOGNIZES THAT WITHOUT DETAILS OF GOVERNMENT'S THINKING ON JUST WHAT KIND OF PORT IT WANTS, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO PROVIDE ANSWERS TO A AND B, BUT EVEN APPROXIMATE ESTIMATES WILL BE USEFUL. IN ANY EVENT, PRESIDENT LAUGERUD ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO OBTAINING EARLY US RESPONSE TO HIS REQUEST FOR A RELIABLE ESTIMATE OF COSTS, TIME AND WORK INVOLVED IN AT LEAST RESTORING PUERTO BARRIOS PIER TO FULLY OPERATIVE CONDITION. MELOY

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